

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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an injury to one is an injury to all

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Workers occupy against job cuts



BY GERRY BATES

"Sit-down strikes," wrote the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky not long after huge waves of factory occupations in France and the US (1930s), "go beyond the limits of 'normal' capitalist procedure. Independently of the demands of the strikers, the temporary seizure of factories deals a blow to the idol, capitalist property. Every sit-down strike poses in a practical manner the question of who is the boss in the factory: the capitalist or the workers?"

The occupations of car parts factories belonging to multinational giant Visteon in Belfast, Basildon and Enfield are not strictly sit-down strikes, but occupations to stop closures and save jobs. Nonetheless, they have the same significance.

Faced with being thrown on the scrap heap, like tens and hundreds of thousands of others across the UK, the Visteon workers have refused to go along. They have challenged the bosses' "sacred" right to do whatever they like to workers in order to turn a profit. And in doing so they have given inspiration to the whole labour movement.

There is every chance that the tactic of workplace occupations will catch on. High profile occupations at Republic Windows and Doors in Chicago, Waterford Crystal in Ireland and Prisme Packaging in Dundee form the background to the Visteon workers' action — and now parents in Glasgow have occupied primary schools to stop them closing. A form of struggle long limited to students is now once again being used by the working class, in workplaces, where it can have real impact.

We need a debate in the labour movement and on the left about how to take such struggles forward; about how they can be used as a lever to challenge our unions' failure to fight on jobs and defend workers' interests in the capitalist crisis. At the same time, though, we need to mobilise huge solidarity for the comrades at Visteon, who are showing workers how to fight and can show them how to win.

• More on Visteon: back page.

After student conference

BY CHRIS MARKS, HULL UNIVERSITY UNION
VICE-PRESIDENT EDUCATION-ELECT (PC)

The National Union of Students conference (31 March-2 April) saw the union's right-wing leadership in the ascendant. Having passed their new anti-democratic constitution, they used the momentum to ride roughshod over the left:

- Right-wingers repeatedly claimed that it is unrealistic to demand free education in the middle of a recession. They wheeled out the old theme of pensioners, the NHS, schools etc. being more deserving — as if these services are underfunded because of students, rather than bank bail outs and tax cuts for the rich!
- The conference voted to ditch even nominal support for free education and to campaign for a graduate tax;
- Labour Students president Wes Streeting was re-elected with 81 percent of the vote;
- Attempts to modify the new constitution were defeated; the leadership pushed through all their appointments to the new Trustee Board, including the Sheffield University pro-VC who threatened to use the police against student occupiers and an executive at Lloyds!;
- The call for a national demonstration was voted down, as was support for the recent wave of occupations over Gaza.

Partly because of the G20 protests, but also because of the effect of defeat over the new constitution, the left presence at the conference had shrunk. Only Education Not for Sale and the SWP had any real organised presence.

However there are some positive signs:

- In elections to the "student section" of the Trustee Board, ENS and Workers' Liberty supporter Daniel Randall was elected top by a long way, having given a speech in which he promised to "cause trouble". Education Not for Sale's fringe meeting was well attended.
 - Student activism in the world outside NUS is reviving.
- The student left needs to:
- Begin organising for a new federation of student unions independent of the structures of NUS. Such a federation could organise actions such as the recent free education demo much more effectively than an ad hoc activist coalition.
 - Get its act together in NUS. The left did not have enough motions at the conference, allowing the right to dominate politically; we need a united left slate for the national executive. The SWP's insistence that differences over the Middle East make unity impossible is a barrier.
 - Organise for direct action over fees and marketisation. The Gaza occupation movement, and the rise of big education campaigns at e.g. the Liverpool universities, Salford, and London Met, show what is possible. We need occupations to demand the abolition of fees, an end to cuts and marketisation and decent funding for education.

- www.free-education.org.uk
- education.not.for.sale@gmail.com

Wirral campaign stops closures

BY ELAINE JONES, VICE CHAIR WIRRAL TUC

Just as the boards were going up on the first of eleven libraries due to be axed by Wirral Council, we were told that the closures would be halted pending a Government enquiry.

This enquiry has come directly as a result of the campaigning that has taken place across the Wirral and is, despite problems we will face in the future, a big step forward. As council cuts begin to be made across the country, it is important activists pool information about what we are doing locally.

50,000 people responded to the council consultation on the cuts, yet Wirral council voted to go ahead with their immediate closures of 11 libraries, followed by an Art Centre, Town Hall, museum, a swimming pool and 49 community resources in the next two years. The council is also planning to close four schools presumably to sell the land to private developers.

By 2011 the Labour/ Liberal council plan to make £3.4 million in cuts and to contract out 900 jobs in social care and transport.

The cuts plans have been met with disbelief and anger by local people. The "consultation" meetings have been packed to capacity.

The council has treat us with contempt — refusing to let council workers leaflet against the cuts in their own workplaces.

"Community transfers" are the council's big idea.

They claim community groups are best placed to run facilities and are asking for bids. This way the council is not required to maintain buildings or services.

Unfortunately Unison decided not to take any action over the cuts and job losses.

The political agenda of (the once) Labour Party, Liberals and the Tories is private profit before public need in both national and local politics. We are saying the needs of the local community must come first not their attempts to make profit.

Wirral Trades Union Council has launched Wirral Against the Cuts to unite all the different campaigns in the area. We have organised public meetings, lobbies of council meetings, protests at the libraries. We are filing a judicial review (though some of us are sceptical about this tactic).

There has been a lot of discussion about standing candidates against the Liberal and Labour councillors. Workers' Liberty supporters say the campaign should support or stand working-class people that call for: an end to all job cuts; no closures, cuts or privatisations; for local resources to be based on public need not private profit. We have been talking about the need for trade union candidates and how the Trades Council should begin to organise such candidates.

We would like to know what's happening in other areas and maybe we can begin link up the campaigns against council cuts.

Fuller article: www.workersliberty.org/node/12251

Glasgow parents occupy!

BY DALE STREET

The occupation by parents of the Wyndford Primary School and St. Gregory's Primary School in Glasgow which began on Friday 3 April is part of a Glasgow-wide campaign (Save Our Schools) triggered by proposals for a city-wide cull of primary schools and nurseries.

In January a meeting of the Glasgow City Council Executive Committee agreed in principle to shut down 13 primary schools and 12 nurseries, attended in total by more than 2,000 children. Later a full meeting of the City Council endorsed the proposals.

In previous rounds the Council has defended school closures on the basis that old schools will be replaced (somewhere else) by new schools. This time however, there are to be closures — but no new schools.

According to the City Council leader Steven Purcell: "We cannot afford to build new schools and nurseries through prudential borrowing."

The City Council's "justification" for the closures is purely economic: the closures will, it claims, result in "savings" of £3.7 millions a year, ranging from an estimated £241,000 from closing Albert Primary to an estimated £32,445 from closing Merrylee Nursery.

The Council has also claimed that in deciding which schools and nurseries to propose for closure it has applied criteria such as educational benefit, building capacity and occupancy, transport arrangements and the wider community impact.

And, just to underline its supposed democratic and people-empowering credentials, the Council extended the consultation period for its proposals, which began on 2 February, from four weeks to six weeks, and promised

public meetings at each of the threatened schools to discuss their proposed closure.

But ever since the proposed closures were first announced by the City Council Executive Committee parents throughout Glasgow have been campaigning in defence of the threatened schools and nurseries and challenging the arguments being put forward by the Council.

Demonstrations have been held in front of the City Chambers and also in the localities where the threatened schools are located. 45 public meetings have been held. 8,000 responses, overwhelmingly hostile, have sent been in to the Council.

Parents have hammered home the point that the closures will break up local communities, create larger classes in the receiving schools, and lead to children travelling a lot further to and from school.

The final decision on the proposed closures will take place at a full City Council meeting on 23 April. It is not a question of deciding whether this school or that school should be kept open or shut down, but of ensuring that

Jobs fight: London Underground, media

As we go to press workers on London Underground are balloting over strike action to defend job cuts and pay.

London Underground is cutting more than a thousand jobs in administration grades. Transport for London is due to cut around three and a half thousand jobs over the next eighteen months.

At the same time London Underground have made an offer of a five-year pay deal — RPI plus one percent in the first year and then RPI only for the next four years. That is an effective pay cut.

ISS and Tubelines have also announced that they would not be paying the final instalment of the London living wage (£7.45 per hour) for the cleaners

who work on the Underground — so they are going to ballot for strike action.

- Uptodate news: www.workersliberty.org/tube

Media companies across the UK and Ireland are making massive cutbacks. Journalists at the *Yorkshire Post*, *Yorkshire Evening Post* and *Leeds Weekly News* are taking strike action to defend jobs (18 journalists). Meanwhile the newspaper group Johnston Press continues to make profits.

Members of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) working for the *Daily Record* and its sister paper the *Sunday Mail* (two mass circulation papers in Scotland) took 24 hours strike action on Saturday 11 April) as part of their campaign against job losses at the two papers.

The strike action was triggered by plans by Trinity Mirror, the conglomerate which owns the two papers

along with five national newspapers and 140 regional newspapers, to merge production of the two titles and cut overall editorial staffing levels from 276 to 206.

Over 40 members of staff applied for voluntary redundancy. But proposals from the NUJ which the union has described as "a compromise solution" to prevent the need for any compulsory redundancies were rejected by Trinity Mirror management.

Strike action is now being followed up by a work-to-rule and by a further 24 hour strike on 17 April. That strike will hit the production of the following day's edition of the *Daily Record*, a more profitable title for Trinity Mirror than the *Sunday Mail*.

Messages of support can be e-mailed to alicem@nuj.org.uk or texted to 07836 542699. Donations should be made payable to the Alan Hutcheson Fund and sent to NUJ Scotland, Third Floor, 114, Union Street, Glasgow, G1 3QQ.

G20 SUMMIT

Whose fightback starts here?

Any working class people who looked to the capitalist world leaders for protection against the economic and social catastrophe that looms before us all, will be disappointed.

The G20 economic summit in London on 2 April was a triumph for the spin-doctors rather than the economists.

Even Tory papers were full of praise: “The fightback starts here”, said the *Daily Telegraph*. The *Daily Mail* had the same headline as the *Guardian*: “Brown’s New World Order”.

El Mundo, in Spain, hailed a “global Marshall Plan”, a new version of the huge US aid package of 1948-52 which (together with the Korean war boom) pulled ravaged Western Europe out of economic collapse. The *Independent*, after a front-page headline “Obama hails the new world order”, had an inside article headlined: “This was the Bretton Woods of our times”, referring back to the July 1944 conference which set up an international financial and trade framework which helped to serve huge capitalist expansion in the 1950s and 60s.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* saw a “turning point at summit”. The *Los Angeles Times* gushed: “G20 summit surprises”.

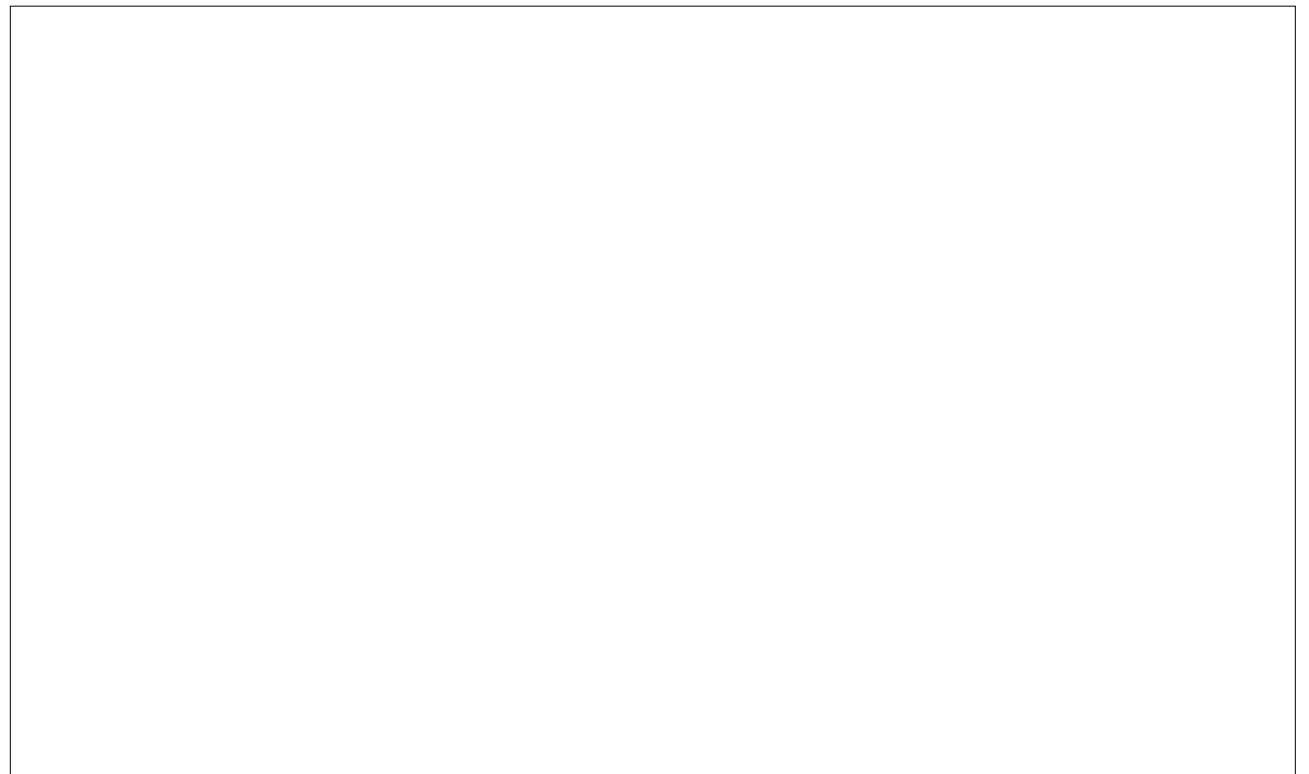
Even newspapers that were highly sceptical, or downright derisive, about the summit on their inside pages, such as the *Financial Times*, were laudatory on their front pages. (FT: “G20 leaders hail crisis fightback”).

Bretton Woods was very different. It was an intense 22-day conference. Despite the presence of representatives of 42 other governments, the essential business was argument between Britain’s Maynard Keynes — the greatest economist of his era, and one who had clear ideas for reconstruction developed over a decade of pioneering theoretical work — and representatives of the US government, which at that juncture had both the power and the will (galvanised by 15 years of horrific world turmoil) to reshape things radically.

The London summit on 2 April was essentially a photo-opportunity where world leaders jetted in to put their signatures to a bland communique which had been sorted out by their officials in advance.

As Chris Giles pointed out in the *Financial Times*, almost all the reputed \$1.1 trillion of new credit was a “repackaging” of plans already decided before the summit. “While the inflation of relatively small and old commitments into an enormous number does not render the summit a failure, the desire to produce large headline numbers as the main result of the gathering suggests the divisions and spats on other issues were considerable”.

At the very best, the \$1.1 trillion figure is more of the same. On the stupendous scale of the financial crisis — the Asian Development Bank recently estimated total losses in financial markets so far at \$50



trillion — and even by the scale of what the US, UK, and other governments have done so far, it is also a fairly small amount more.

The IMF’s resources are to be tripled. This was mostly agreed well before the summit. But in any case it doesn’t touch the problem that the huge expansion of financial markets, the huge pyramiding of debt, over the last twenty years or so, long ago dwarfed the IMF. The IMF would have to be a hundred times bigger, not three times bigger, to be a decisive force in the crisis.

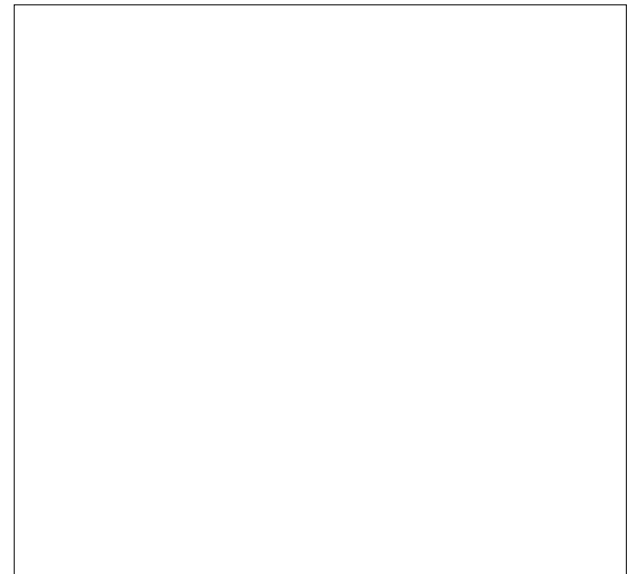
The summit’s decisions included no big aid package for the “emerging” economies, in Eastern Europe for example, devastated by the shrinkage of global credit, and not even a hint of a comprehensive reshaping of the world economic order.

The official communique from the summit was much shorter but also blander than the one from the previous such summit, in Washington in November 2008. Like that summit, it talked about more and better regulation of financial markets — who doesn’t, these days? — but without specifics.

The Washington summit had a vaguely-worded promise to move all trading of credit default swaps to take place through regulated exchanges (same sort of thing as stock exchanges) rather than direct private deals, but that has disappeared.

The “hardest” content in the communique was, as in Washington, a commitment against protectionism. To be sure, every capitalist government wants every other capitalist government to keep its borders open for trade and investment. The question is whether they can hold the line.

The Washington summit committed the participating governments to avoid all protectionist measures for the next 12 months. In the following five months, 17 out of the 20 governments broke that commitment. All the breaches have been relatively minor, so far; but all the London summit did was to “reaffirm the commitment made in Washington” (without comment on the fact that it had already



Our fightback: top Visteon occupation, below “Climate Camp in the City” 1-2 April

been broken) and “extend this pledge to the end of 2010”.

The Washington summit also committed itself — unrealistically, but it committed itself — to completing the Doha round of world tariff-reduction negotiations by the end of 2008. That commitment has simply been dropped, without comment.

It is not absolutely impossible that the financial turmoil will start to settle down in the coming months. But if it does, the London summit will not have had much to do with it. And even if the financial turmoil does settle down, the snowballing into trade, production, and jobs of the implosion of credit has a long way to go yet.

We can have no faith in the sort of “fightback” trumpeted by the *Daily Telegraph*. But the sort of fightback represented by the Visteon workers’ occupations — that indeed starts here.

A note about this issue

Solidarity 3-149 is slimmer than normal as it will be being sold during a holiday period. Readers will also note the focus on current and historical examples of workers’ occupations as well as other important contemporary struggles. We hope you find it useful.

How sit-in strikes built the unions in USA

Throughout the twentieth century there were periods of class struggle that saw workers occupy factories and workplaces: in the 1920s in Italy; in the 1930s in France, the USA and elsewhere; in France in May 1968. And in Britain in 1973-75 there were over 100 occupations over job cuts. The following account by Walter Linder* tells the story of how the tactic — called a “sit-down strike” in the US — was used at General Motors car plants at Flint, Michigan in 1936-37. This 44 day strike was the key struggle which shaped the mass trade union movement in the USA. The Congress of Industrial Organisation (CIO) was set up on the back of a fight to organise the unskilled and semi-skilled workers in the mass production industries of the USA during the Depression of the 1930s; the CIO’s organising strategy (though it was not always very militant) was to set up “industrial unions”, unions which organised all workers in particular industries instead of being narrowly confined to workers with particular skills.

This account of the Flint sit-down strike shows exactly how powerful the “occupation” tactic can be; it needs to be remembered, discussed and modified to fit the circumstances of today.

The tactic of seizing possession of, and holding, great plants was not entirely unknown to the workers of the United States, but nothing like its mushrooming during the struggles of the mid-Thirties had ever been seen before.

In the sit-down strike the workers found a weapon with which they could conquer the powerful resistance to unionisation they met in the drive to organise rubber, auto, steel, electrical and other basic industries. One by one giant manufacturing corporations like General Motors, United States Steel, General Electric and Goodyear were compelled to recognise and deal with the union. In some cases the resistance of the giants collapsed at scarcely more than the threat of a sit-down because they had seen its power.

Industrial unionism was born in the sit-down strikes... and was the impetus to bring more than five millions into the emerging Congress of Industrial Organisations (CIO).

EARLY SIT-DOWN STRIKES

One of the first sit-down strikes in the US occurred in 1906 at General Electric’s Schenectady, New York plant. And in 1910, women garment workers in New York sat down in shop to prevent their bosses from farming-out work to contractors not on strike. But the 1936 Akron (Ohio) rubber workers’ sit-down strike was an example that spread to other basic industries in the US.

US workers found the sit-down to have many advantages over the traditional forms of strike. It is harder for the company to oust men from inside a plant than break through an encircling picket line. Bosses are more reluctant to resort to strike-breaking violence, because it directly endangers millions of dollars of company property, vast assembly lines and unfinished products.

The use of machine guns, tear gas and gangsters is much less effective. [GM used the Black Legion, a terror group financed by major stockholders Du Pont; it tarred and feathered and murdered active unionists].

It is harder to label strikers aggressors while they are inside.

In a sit-down the workers’ morale is heightened. They are inside and therefore know that scabs are not operating the machines; they are really protecting their jobs and this leads to a higher degree of solidarity and militancy.

The workers are never scattered, but are always on call at a moment’s notice in case of trouble.

The basic democratic character of the sit-down is guaranteed by the fact that the workers on the line, rather than outside officials, determine its course.

Defence against labour spies is perfected because a sit-down can be started by one or two rank-and-file leaders over an issue that affects the entire plant [GM spent \$839,000 on detective work in 1934 alone].

GM: THE BACKGROUND

GM ran Flint like a feudal barony. 80% of the town’s population of 150,000 were directly dependent on GM for livelihood, 20% indirectly. 45,000 men and women toiled in the GM Flint plants. All city officials — the mayor, city manager, police chief and the judges — were GM stockholders or officials or both. The only local newspaper, *The Flint Journal*, was 100% GM, all the time.

Total domination of the workers and the community in which they lived was part of the system by which GM was able to net an average annual profit of \$173 millions from 1927 to 1937 during the depths of the Great Depression.

GM in 1936, employing 55% of all US auto workers in 69 plants, was bigger than Ford and Chrysler combined. 350 of its officers and directors were paid ten million dollars in salaries that year.

The condition of the auto workers was in stark contrast to that of their bosses. In 1935, a year in which the government declared \$1600 as the minimum income on which a family of four could live decently, the average auto worker took home \$900.

A foreman could fire at will. Layoffs between the old and new model year lasted from three to five months, without unemployment insurance.

But it was the speed up that made life intolerable. One witness reported: “The men worked like fiends, their jaws set and eyes on fire. Nothing in the world exists for them except the line chassis bearing down on them relentlessly. They come along on a conveyor and as each passes, the worker has to finish his particular job before the next one bears down on him. The line moves fast and the chassis are close together.”

Young workers, unused to the unbearable pace, couldn’t eat until they threw up their previous meals when they got home.

GROWTH OF THE UAW

Prior to 1930 there had been little organising in the auto industry. However, in 1933, the Trade Union Unity League, a left-led organising group, created the Auto Workers’ Union along industrial lines (organising all the workers in the industry). It conducted strikes which eventually involved tens of thousands and which were met with ferocious brutality. The TUUL-type militancy earned the hatred of the corporations and also of the staid, sell-out business unionism of the American Federation of Labour [which opposed industrial unionism].

In June 1936 Wyndham Mortimer — a member of the Communist Party — was selected by the UAW to be its organiser in the heart of GM territory. When he arrived in the city there were barely 100 union members, and the majority of them company spies. All the others, 20,000 of them, had quit in response to the sell-out policies of the AFL leadership.

Mortimer organised a completely independent group, visiting workers from door to door, signing them up. He published a newsletter which went out to 7,000 workers each week. He also organised a secret union group in one department at GM’s Fisher Body plant.

The union gained strength. Seven stoppages, provoked by speed-up and wage cuts, occurred at Fisher Body No. 1 in November 1936. On 12 November a sit-down strike began in the same factory over the sacking of two men who refused to do the extra work.

The story of the workers’ success spread through Flint like wildfire. Workers began signing up to the union by the hundreds.

The Fisher Body plants (nos. 1 and 2) were where chassis were made, without which there could be no automobile. It was at the heart of the GM empire.

On 17 December the union requested national collective bargaining to GM. Management said it would bargain only on a plant-to-plant basis. A national strike began when Fisher Body in Cleveland came out on 28 December.

On 30 December when Flint workers at Fisher Body No.

1 found GM was attempting to move production away from the plant, a sit-down strike was called for. Henry Kraus, a UAW editor described the scene: “The men stood still facing the door. It was like trying to chain a natural force... Suddenly they broke through the door and made a race for the plan gates, running in every direction towards the quarter-mile long buildings.”

The workers inside immediately began to secure the plant against any attack. They moved scores of unfinished Buick bodies in front of all entrances to form a gigantic barricade. With acetylene torches they welded a steel frame around every door. Paint guns for spraying would-be invaders were located throughout the plant.

With a simultaneous sit-down in the smaller Fisher No. 2 GM body production ground to a halt. The press and the company raved and ranted about a “Soviet-style tyranny” being imposed on the country.

INTERNAL ORGANISATION

Once inside the workers set about organising one of the most effective strike apparatuses ever seen in the United States. At a mass meeting they elected a committee of stewards and a strike strategy committee of five to govern the strike. Other committee were organised: food, police, information, sanitation and health... Two meetings of the entire plant (of 1200) were held daily.

The strike committee posted rules on all bulletin boards: smoking only in restricted areas, liquor and gambling banned, information to the outside given only through the regular committee and no phone calls by individuals.

The police committee was responsible for guarding every entrance to the plant. Within this committee of 65 the most trusted workers constituted the Special Patrol. They would check out all rumours and report any violations of rules for discipline. No one could enter for leave the plan unless checked out by the “reception committee”. Such care was necessary since the company was always attempting to spread rumours of scandals inside.

Every worker inside was on duty for three hours, off for nine, on three and off nine in each 24 hour period. Every day at 3pm there was a general clean up.

They strikers divided themselves into social groups of 15, setting up “house” in some cosy corner and living family-style for the “duration”.

Daily visits were arranged whereby workers’ children could be handed through a window while workers talked to their wives as they stood outside.

The monotony and boredom was probably the most difficult problem to overcome. Calisthenics were organised daily. A 12 piece orchestra was organised from among the strikers and concerts were broadcast every evening. The strikers took to writing poems and songs, the best of which were published in the union paper.

Labor classes were held daily in the history of the labour movement. Charlie Chaplin donated his movie *Modern Times* and film showings were held.

The Women’s auxiliary — which was to play a key role in the strike — organised dancing, representing all national groups, in front of the plant.

The organisation outside the plant was no less efficient and vital to the existence of the workers inside. Union headquarters at Pengelly Hall was the hub. A nursery was set up to take care of the children while their mothers were working for the strike.

Committees were established for food preparation, publicity, welfare and relief, pickets and defence and union growth. Two hundred people, mostly women, prepared the food. A “chisling” committee was set up to collect food and supplies. Two-thirds of what was needed was obtained in this fashion, the committee going house to house and to small shopkeepers.

Picketing took place around the clock in front of the plant.

Support poured in from all over the country. Despite the attempt of the national AFL to sabotage the strike, its city central bodies in Flint, Detroit, Cleveland and Minneapolis backed the sit-downers with all sorts of aid.

As production decreased daily, GM turned to their courts for an injunction with which to oust the strikers. Although there was little law relevant to the strike tactic GM got its injunction. As a nervous sheriff stood on a

* Walter Linder was a member of Progressive Labor Party in the USA, a Maoist organisation. Despite the author’s politics this article is a very good factual account. It is substantially abridged here (taking out a lot of the commentary about the Communist Party who were involved in the strike) and the full article can be found at <http://www.plp.org/pamphlets/flintstrike.html>

table in the Fisher No.1 cafeteria reading the writ, workers laughed and kidded him and broke out into “Solidarity Forever” when he had finished. The workers refused to budge.

One of the union attorney then dug up information that proved to be a bombshell: the judge who granted the injunction owned 3,665 shares of GM stocks, worth \$219,000 dollars — a clear conflict of interest. GM was forced to forget the injunction.

There appeared on the scene an organisation called the Flint Alliance, claiming to be “loyal” GM workers who had been laid off in other plants because of the Fisher Body strike and who were demanding an end to “minority rule”. In reality the Alliance was set up both as a strike-breaking group and to mobilise vigilante action against the sit-downers. It was composed principally of GM supervisors, of which there were hundreds, and businessmen.

Despite harassment, those workers who were not on strike and not in the union let it be known, by their presence at demonstrations and picket lines, that their sympathies were with the sit-downers.

THE BATTLE OF BULLS RUN

On the afternoon of 11 January 1937, as workers were handing food in through the main gate of Fisher Body No. 2, company guards suddenly appeared and overpowered them, closing the gate of the smaller plant. The company then turned off the heat.

Word was sent to union HQ and hundreds of workers raced to the scene and rushed the guards. The guards phoned the police and rushed to the “ladies’ room” claiming they were kidnapped. The whole scene was a pre-arranged provocation.

The cops arrived in tens minutes, loaded with revolvers, gas guns, grenades and supplies of tear and nauseating gas. They blockaded the streets, removed parked cars and then attacked the pickets now guarding the plant. Women pickets raced to the plant.

Inside the plant the sit-downers dragged fire hoses to the windows and began directing streams of water at the advancing cops. The cops retreated.

The cops regrouped and made a second rush but were met with a volley of bottles, hinges and lumps of coal.

Then the cops opened fire. Fourteen were wounded,

one, a leader of the bus drivers’ union critically. But the cops retreated up a hill.

As the cops stayed on top of the hill, men and women began to organise an all-night vigil. The Governor arrived in Flint and said he was holding the National Guard “in readiness”. But GM’s strategy — to get martial law declared, to starve out the workers and eventually evict them — had failed.

The next day 8,000 workers from nearly by cities and towns rallied in front of Fisher No. 2 to celebrate victory. Fisher No. 1 shored up its defences against the mobilisation of 1500 National Guardsmen, e.g. the huge crane whistle was set to blow at the first sign of attack.

1200 “John Doe” warrants were made out to be served on the strikers, charging them with “criminal syndicalism, felonious assault, riot, destruction of property and kidnapping”.

One of the results of the victory of Bull Runs was the new importance it gave to women in the strike. A Women’s Emergency Brigade was organised: composed of volunteers, organised on semi-military lines, these were women who could be rounded up for any emergency on a moment’s notice.

DOUBLE CROSS AND COUNTER-ATTACK

On 13 January Governor Frank Murphy called both sides into conference and two days later GM agreed to a truce. National bargaining with the UAW was to begin on the 18th on all issues. The sit-downers would evacuate the struck plants but the plants would remain closed.

But just before the workers were due to march out as a body the UAW found out that GM intended to negotiate with the Flint Alliance. The sit-downers decided to stay and GM walked out of negotiations.

GM then began an all-out drive to break the strike.

Vigilantes smashed UAW headquarters at Anderson, Indiana and ran the union organisers out of town. Five pickets were clubbed by cops on the line in front of the Cadillac plant in Detroit. The state legislature sponsored a bill to outlaw sit-down strikes...

Across Chevrolet Avenue from Fisher Body No 2 stood nine Chevrolet factories. Half of the 14,000 total worked in one factory — Chevy 4 — the motor assembly plant. It was the largest single unit of the GM empire.

Inside the plant the superintendant had armed guards patrolling day and night. The union was growing but activists were being fired.

The union called a Chevrolet members meeting on Sunday 31 January and 1500 responded. The union was to demand its sacked members were rehired. Then a sit-down strike was carefully organised among the most trusted union members — very few men knew that No. 4 plant was the actual target for the strike. The union’s organiser Bob Travis had passed onto to the company through its stool pigeons that No. 9 plant was the target.

On February 1 there was a mass meeting at the union hall. The workers were called to move to Chevy Nine to defend workers being beaten up. Meanwhile the entire armed force from the whole Chevrolet division had been stationed next to No. 9. At 3:20 the night shift marched in

Continued on page 6

The 1970s: 200 factories occupied in Britain

By TOM UNTERRAINER

In the four years from July 1970, British capitalism “lost” more than five million working days to combined industrial action against a new Industrial Relations Act and government incomes policy.

The British labour movement was at a high water mark following the defeat of *In Place of Strife*, the 1964-70 Labour government’s move towards anti-union laws, in May 1969. Not only had the TUC thrown its weight — after some delay — behind rank-and-file and Communist Party organised efforts against legislation, but an explosion of shop floor organisation emerged in the form of new shop stewards’ committees and rank-and-file initiatives.

This historic period of militancy coincided with drastic turmoil in the British economy. In the post-war period to 1970 the economy had grown by less than half the rate of the United States. British capitalists were unable to keep up with increasing competition in the global market and were reluctant to invest money to maintain competitiveness. The capitalist class and their Tory government sought to shift the blame to the working class and their organisations through the instrument of a new set of anti-union laws (more restrictive than those proposed in *In Place of Strife*) and to cut costs. Unemployment which had been very low ever since the start of World War Two, rose to over one million.

These factors, and the example of France’s huge wave of factory occupations in 1968, produced a wave of factory and workplace occupations across Britain. The first of these occupations started on Clydeside in the summer of 1971.

Upper Clyde Shipbuilders (UCS) had come up against crisis after crisis since the Labour government conglomerated a number of already declining ship yards in 1966. In the five years from 1966, 30% of the workforce had been slashed and the remaining, severely diminished workforce increased productivity by 85%. Rather than nationalise the yards the Labour government chose to subsidise them heavily. The Tories chose another path and began to “sell” yards for as little as £1 along with millions of pounds worth of loans.

When the new owners failed to turn a profit, and the Tories refused new investment, closures were threatened. With 6000 jobs at stake, the UCS workers staged a “work-in” occupation. This action, combined with two one-day solidarity strikes across Scotland, saved three of the four yards and won close to £50 million in new government investment. This was a significant victory and a magnificent display of working-class action. It inspired more than *two hundred* other occupations, including at Plessey and Fisher Bendix.

Such action resulted in official TUC recognition of the legitimacy and effectiveness of workplace and factory occupations. But the wave of occupations came to sharp end in 1979, when the Tories regained office. And before then, they had rarely gone politically beyond attempts to keep factories going as cooperatives, or appeals to the government for aid.

At UCS, the sit-in leaders, Stalinist “Communists” opposed any action further than this specific “work-in”. They refused to call out other shipyards — calls that would have been largely answered — and refused to call for the nationalisation of the industry. Jobs were saved for the time being, but the industry was not.

Today, the current wave of occupations has to start a process of climbing out of years of sluggishness, the product of defeat. Individual trade union leaders are accepting the occupations as a fact but are not calling for them to spread. The unions are not organising solidarity actions.

In short, a *workers’ plan* is needed to give direction.

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From page 5

yelling “strike” and the guards closed the doors and rushed in. One woman reported:

“They were fighting inside and outside the plant. We had to break the windows... to get air to the boys who were being gassed inside.”

meanwhile No. 4 was virtually devoid of any pro-company force. The conveyors in No. 4 were switched off one by one. Soon the strikers at No. 4 were hundreds strong. “Everywhere at key conveyors, squads of union men were stationed. Others were set to guard gates and mount lookout. The company men fled.”

About two thousand workers remained in the plant and an equal number went off.

The women came down the hill, hundreds strong in bright red caps, singing “Hold the Fort for we are coming...” They spread out in front of the plant gates, amid cheers from the men inside and the watching crowd, and locked arms. If any cops or troops were to attempt to break into the plant, it was plain they would first have to go over these women’s bodies.

Joe Sayen, one of the union men addressed the crowd outside the factory:

“We want the whole world to understand what we are fighting for. We are fighting for freedom and life and liberty. This is our one great opportunity. What if we should be defeated? What if we should be killed? We have only one life. That’s all we can lose and we might as well die like heroes than like slaves.”

The troops then took possession of all streets and approaches, isolating both the Chevy plant and Fisher Body No. 2 across the street. Virtual martial law was declared. Guards with fixed bayonets surrounded No. 4. Eight machine guns and 37 mm howitzers were mounted on the hill overlooking both plants. The National Guard was upped to 2,300 and finally to 4,000. But the strikers remained firm.

With hundreds of millions of dollars worth of machinery at stake, on 4 February GM agreed to resume negotiations while the workers stayed in the plants.

By 8 February there existed an armed force of 4,000 National Guardsmen, 1,000 deputized vigilantes, the Flint cops and the Flint. Alliance, all “ready to move.”

The workers prepared to defend themselves. In Fisher Body No 1 a majority of the strikers signed up in a “fight-to-the-death committee”. Their plan was to battle any attacker on a floor-to-floor basis, right up to the roof.

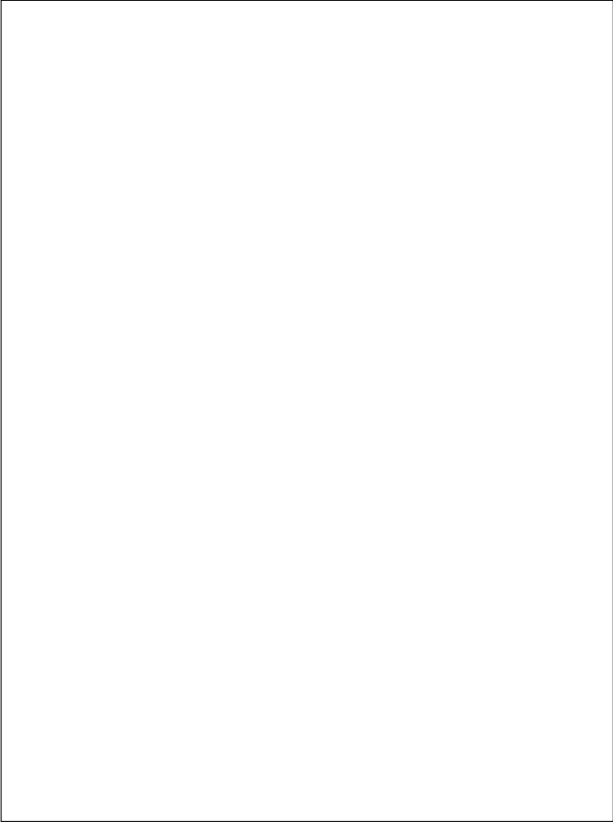
Outside, the preparations were no less militant. Locals from around Michigan sent delegations to Flint to take part in the defence.

The women’s organisation, supplemented by women from around Michigan, decided to demonstrate in Flint on 9 February. The women marched to Fisher No. 1, merging with the thousands already there and encircled the entire length and breadth of the plant, six abreast.

VICTORY

Tens of thousands of workers in Flint were surrounding the plants and refusing to surrender. The heat and light at Chevy 4 were turned off. Nearly 5,000 sit-downers were prepared to “fight to the death”. On 11 February, the 44th day of the sit-down, General Motors gave up.

It signed a contract with the UAW, recognising the



Women workers at Woolworths, inspired by Flint, occupied in March 1937

union as sole bargaining agent in the 20 struck plants, and for all its members in the other plants, and agreed not to deal with any other group for at least six months. All union members were to be rehired and would suffer no discrimination because of union activity.

After a long discussion the deal was accepted. As the workers came out at Chevrolet No. 4, wives and children rushed to husbands and fathers who had not been seen for ten fear-filled days. Strong, heavily-bearded men were unashamed of tears. Then someone began to sing “Solidarity”:

“Solidarity forever! Solidarity forever! Solidarity forever! For the union makes us strong!”

The victory sparked a wave of strikes and sit-downs across the country. In Detroit alone, in the next two weeks 87 sit-downs were begun. Four days after the workers had marched out of GM’s plants UAW membership reached 200,000. Another 100,000 were signed up in the next few months.

Briggs and Murray, two body manufacturers, gave wage hikes on the 15th; a second Briggs plant in Flint won time and one-half for overtime and a wage increase after a 7-hour sit-down on the 17th; 3,000 women in various factories sat down in Detroit on the 18th; 2,000 more joined them the next day. By the 22nd there were 75,000 auto workers in the UAW in Detroit alone, and \$75 million had been added to auto workers’ wages in that model year. On the 23rd ten strikes were won in a single day and Chrysler offered increases in all departments, while agreeing to negotiate a contract with the UAW for its 75,000 workers.

On the 24th, less than two weeks after the Flint sit-down had ended, United Press estimated that a mini-

mum of 30,000 workers were sitting in across the country. Seventeen strikes were in progress in Detroit and 9,000 New England shoe workers had just walked out. The next day 14 new sit-downs began in Detroit.

On 2 March, United States Steel — the largest steel company in the world and the other giant bastion of the open shop alongside GM — signed a contract with the CIO’s Steel Workers Organizing Committee — without a strike! After long and bloody battles dating back to the 19th century, a union had come to steel.

By 3 March, 47 sit-down strikes had been won in Detroit, and young women working in Woolworth’s had smuggled cots into the stores to attempt to bring down that million-dollar corporation.

The Flint strike was an attack on one of the important sectors of Wall Street, a point well understood by many of its leaders. Mortimer had told the Fisher Body workers:

“This thing is deeper than most people realise. Behind GM is the Steel Institute. Behind the Steel Institute are the DuPonts. It is a fight between the American working class and the tap root of American capitalism.”

And behind GM was also the fascist Liberty League and Black Legion, spawned by some of the biggest corporate interests in the country. The auto monopoly represented a financial power that was interlocked with finance capital throughout the world. In organising GM, the auto workers were breaking through the enemy line at one of its strongest points, which is why the repercussions spread throughout the country.

RANK AND FILE

Almost by definition it is in the nature of a sit-down that the rank and file must run it. It cannot succeed otherwise. Solidarity and unity are the cornerstones of its success.

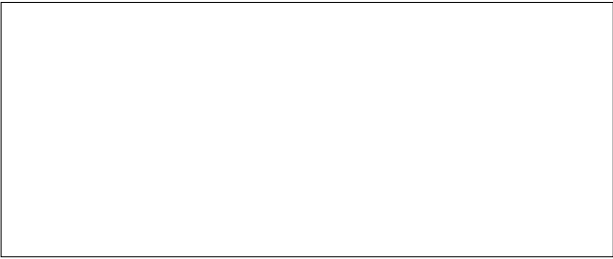
Through such participation of the mass, many things became possible: demonstrations; mass picketing barring entry and discouraging attack through active defence; 24-hour picket lines; agitation through bulletins, newspapers, sound trucks, and mass singing of labour songs to bolster morale; a democratically-run strike committee with direct and large rank-and-file representation and therefore control; relief committees; free food supply, etc.

It was this mass participation that enabled the workers to “take possession” of the plants and gain backing from the working-class population of a company town. This helped provide the strong outside support necessary to guarantee the existence of the sit-downers inside. Many times it was the overwhelming, all-pervasive character of the mass in motion that was largely responsible for the tremendous rapid growth of the union. Workers seeing the power of the organized group found it irresistible, especially as it accumulated victories over a heretofore-unbeatable enemy.

So predominant was this rank-and-file character that it moved in advance of the CIO leaders: “It is probably true that if... the CIO had been entirely free to pick (its) own time and place, the struggle in automobiles would have come somewhat later, might even have been postponed until after a victory had been won in steel or in rubber or in coal. The auto workers’ strike was primarily a rank and file movement.”

A WORKERS’ PLAN FOR THE CRISIS

1. Nationalise the entire system of banks and financial institutions, without compensation for the bosses and under democratic control.
2. Reverse cuts and privatisation; tax the rich to rebuild the NHS, education etc. as public services under workers’ and service-users’ control.
3. Resist the job cuts. Jobs for all: a shorter working week, maximum 35 hours, without loss of pay; expand public services; nationalise firms declaring mass redundancies.
4. The labour movement should calculate its own, realistic, inflation figure and demand, as a minimum, that wages, pensions and benefits are inflation-proofed; benefits that are enough to live on; a minimum wage of £8.80 an hour without exemptions. Phase out VAT etc; cut taxes for the least well off; tax the rich.
5. No evictions. A big programme of council house building and confiscation of empty/unused properties to provide cheap, quality housing for all.
6. Open the books of the corporations! Fight for workers’ control at every level of the economy. Nationalise the giant industrial and service companies
7. Nationalise energy and transport; use their profits



to bring down energy bills; make local transport free and reduce other fares; invest in public transport and renewables and convert polluting industries as part of a worker-led transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy.

8. Scrap the anti-union laws; a positive charter of workers’ rights. Support workers defying the law. Fight for civil liberties and democracy: abolish the monarchy and the House of Lords, all representatives should be recallable and paid a worker’s wage.

9. Organise workers regardless of immigration status, as part of the fight for open borders. Mass mobilisation against the far right and the social decay on which it feeds.

10. Fight for women’s liberation: demand equal pay without compromise; expanded abortion rights; free, universal childcare, well-funded services and other demands to make equality real.

11. Unite with workers across Europe and the world to fight for a levelling up of wages, conditions and rights; for a Workers’ United Europe.

12. Organise the unorganised, including young, contracted out and precarious workers. Organise the unemployed. Union officials should be elected annually and paid a worker’s wage; decisions on industrial action made by elected strike committees. Rebuild Trades Councils.

The unions must fight to impose their demands on the Labour government — not advise or lobby Brown, but confront him politically! Rally the activists to build a movement for independent working-class representation, as the basis for a new workers’ party. Its aim should be a workers’ government — a government based on mass working-class mobilisation and accountable to the labour movement, which serves our class as the Tories and New Labour have served the rich, and reshapes society in the interests of people, not profit.

DEATH AT G20 PROTEST

Demand freedom to protest

By DAN KATZ

On Wednesday 1 April thousands of anti-G20 demonstrators protesters converged on the City of London in a series of protests which aimed to highlight capitalist responsibility for climate change, environmental destruction, poverty and war.

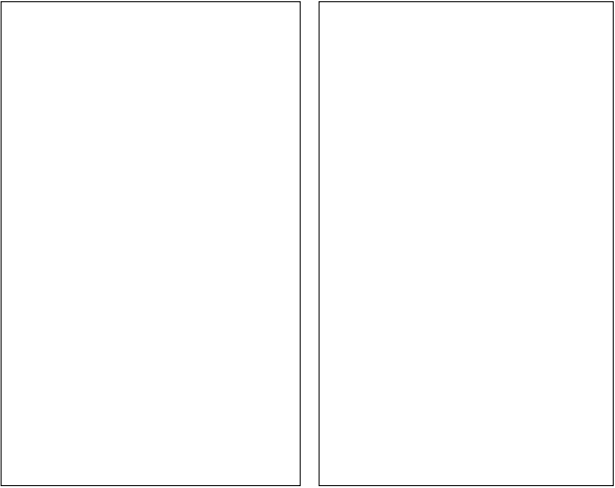
The press and police had been warning of the possibility of “extreme violence” especially from the demonstration destined for the Bank of England and the police had promised to meet any law-breaking with great ruthlessness.

On the day the police surrounded many hundreds of protesters using a technique known as a “kettle” — forcibly keeping protesters hemmed inside a small area for hours. On television police were seen lashing out with metal batons, and protesters were seen bleeding and being battered.

As the day wore on, skirmishes and fights broke out as demonstrators began to gather demanding the release of those caught up in the kettle. The riot police with dogs moved in.

Caught up in the fighting was a 47-year old worker, Ian Tomlinson, who collapsed and died. Following a police post mortem, officials declared Tomlinson had died from, “a sudden heart attack while on his way home from work.”

The state’s version of events began to be challenged after a number of credible independent witnesses came forward claiming that the police had caused



Tomlinson’s death by pushing or hitting him. Freelance photographer Anna Branthwaite states she saw Ian Tomlinson, “rushed from behind by a riot officer.” Amiri Howe recalled seeing Tomlinson being hit “near the head” with a police baton.

On Thursday 2 April an emergency meeting was called in east London to discuss how to respond to Tomlinson’s death and to begin a process of seeking out people who may have witnessed what happened to Ian Tomlinson.

That process initiated by activists and people who participated in the G20 demonstrations has ensured that the media has begun to re-examine the police version of events and that witnesses have come forward.

The 100-strong meeting decided to march from the Bank of England to Bethnal Green police station where many of those arrested during the protests had been taken. The demonstration took place at short notice on the morning of Saturday 4 April. Protesters demanded an independent inquiry into Tomlinson’s death, an end to brutal police tactics against protesters and the freedom to protest.

One of the organisers expressed their key concern: “It is important that we took a stand against police brutality, we must not let this issue be swept aside and forgotten.”

WHAT WE SAY

The police are not neutral. They are available to be used brutally, if necessary, against those who threaten capitalist law and order.

The police have a poor record of solving crimes that matter to working class people — house breaking and street violence, for example, have very low clear-up rates.

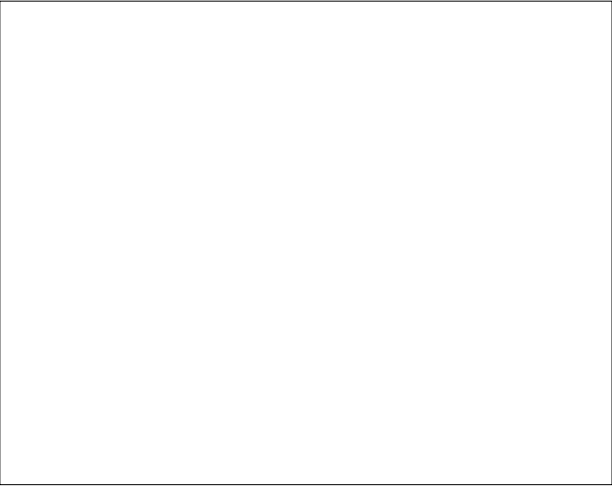
But the police are always present in great force to meet protesters and strikers.

Clearly all official channels should be used to bring those responsible for the death of Ian Tomlison to justice. But we should not believe that these mechanisms are even handed and fair.

Those that marched last Saturday were right to demonstratively raise the issue of police violence and to insist on the importance of this killing.

To curtail police power and to restrict their ability to act against us we propose:

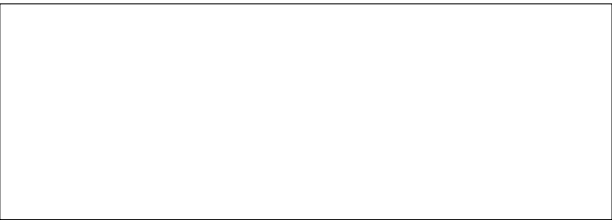
- Abolition of special police units (riot squads and



The demonstration on Saturday 4 September got a lot of press attention but would they have investigated Ian Tomlinson’s death if the protest had not been organised?

the political police, the Special Branch) and the secret police (MI5 and MI6)

- Disarming of the police
- Placing the police under the control of directly elected committees which have the right to control budgets, and set parameters for police operations, and the ability to hire and fire senior police.



Tamil protest

As we go to press Tamils are protesting outside Parliament against the ongoing massacres in Sri Lanka. Earlier the protestors had blocked Westminster Bridge and, once again it appears, the police had resorted to heavy-handed tactics.

A demonstration has been called for Saturday 11 April, meeting at Temple tube, Embankment at 11am.

Strikers, occupiers, don’t wait for union leaders!

Olivier Delbeke, a CGT union activist in Paris spoke to Solidarity about the trade union day of action in France on 19 March

How did 19 March compare to the day of action on 29 January?

The demonstrations were bigger than those of 29 January: between 2 and 2.5 million demonstrators on 29 January, at least 3 million demonstrators on 19 March.

All the observers agree that it was not exactly the same people marching this time. More workers from the private sector joined the demos — the effects of the crisis: plant closures, sackings everywhere.

But there were fewer strikers in the public sector. All the national leaderships of all the trade unions decided not to call to “a general strike” but instead “strikes or demonstrations”. Why go on strike if it is not for a serious fight? In the transport sector, the union federations refused to call for a strike on the pretext of “helping people to go to the demonstrations”.

But the anger of public sector workers against the wages freeze and cuts in jobs and services is strong. This anger is expressed by the demonstrators and strikers but the leadership refuse to make it stronger.

What have all the actions achieved?

January’s action was described as being the result of a long and intense preparatory work beginning in October. But that is a myth!

After the 29th, the union leaders waited until Sarkozy summoned them in mid-February. Inevitably “social dialogue summit” gave nothing except empty words.

So... they decided to take one more month to call for something else, and that resulted in 19 March.

Has the victory in Guadeloupe had an effect on the French labour movement?

The movements in Guadeloupe, Martinique, Réunion draw a lot of sympathy among metropolitan workers and militants. But the strategy of French union leaders is the opposite of that pursued by Liyannaj Kont Pwofitasyon (LKP) in Guadeloupe.

LKP is based on true unity (more than 50 organisations: unions, consumers’ associations, youth and cultural associations, political groups, etc.) with a strong platform covering all the workers’ demands you can imagine (wages, prices, employment, etc), and the call to fight is a clear one. LKP didn’t go from one day of action to another day of action... one or two months later. No, they engaged in action and they saw it through!

What is needed in the French movement now?

The rank-and-file must organise to be able to face the disasters befalling workers, and not leave organising action to unaccountable leaders. A growing number of union activists are showing dissatisfaction with the non-serious calls to action by leaders.

At each new advertisement of a plant closure, workers are more and more going into occupation. There are some signs that show the depth of the anger: when a CFTC delegate (the most quiet and shy people among French workers) throws a stone at a manager, that means that something is happening, that class struggles are intensifying. Once again there are kidnappings of managers, something quiet rare since the 1970s.

The last days saw that form of struggle at Caterpillar (in Grenoble), and FNAC and Conforama workers blocked Pineau, a big shark, in his taxi as he was trying to fly from an official meeting with union delegations. The police freed him after two hours, but they would not be able to free all the bosses if dozens, hundreds, thousands of bosses faced the anger of millions of workers.

To centralise all the anger against the government and the bosses, a call for a national demo against sackings and plant closures would be a way to put one, two, three million demonstrators on the Paris streets directly confronting the government, like the famous demonstration in January 1994 against the law initiated by Minister Bayrou against public and secular school. Bayrou did not survive the numbers of demonstrators that day...

That’s quite a different thing from waiting for 1 May to call for demonstrations, as the national leaders are doing: they are leaving the whole of April to Sarkozy and the bosses to act unchallenged.

Ford Visteon occupations A fight for the whole movement

VICKI MORRIS REPORTS (7 APRIL)

“We done what we had to do, we have a message for big multinational corporations: you can’t get away with it no more. You should treat ordinary people with respect. And it’s not us that should be treated as criminals but people like Mandelson.”

Kevin Nolan, Unite convenor from the occupied Visteon car parts factory in Enfield, was speaking outside the High Court on Monday 6 April. He and the deputy convenor, Piers Hood, had gone to the court in the morning facing imprisonment for defying an eviction notice brought on behalf of Visteon against the workers occupying their former workplace in north London. Visteon employees are also in occupation at another factory in Belfast, and employees in Basildon are picketing their former workplace.

The Belfast workers went into occupation on 31 March on hearing that they were to be made redundant when the Visteon UK company went into receivership, entailing the loss of 565 jobs in all. Visteon workers in Enfield and Basildon were told to return in the morning or over the next week to collect their tools. Instead they went away, discussed and resolved to return in the morning to emulate their Belfast workmates.

On Wednesday 1 April some of the Enfield workers succeeded in getting inside the factory and secured part of it for the occupation. They have control of the paintshop and roof.

There are about 100 workers in occupation in Enfield. Workers who are not occupying visit the factory constantly, along with family members. As the days have passed a steady stream of visitors has arrived, along with messages of support from across the UK, and money raised at union meetings.

On Saturday 4 April there was a rally at the factory. Rightly, the occupations have become a focus for the local labour movement, and they need to be a focus for the whole British labour movement.

AN INSPIRING EXAMPLE

Visteon is not the first group of workers to go into occupation in the UK since the recession began. The campaign by Visteon workers, however, has the potential to be an example that galvanises the whole labour movement to resist job losses.

Visteon UK, an injection moulding company making car parts — mostly dashboards — for Ford, Jaguar and Land Rover, was an integral part of the Ford company until 2000 when it was spun off. Visteon UK has gone into liquidation, but it is not clear that it is actually bankrupt. By going into bankruptcy, the company hopes to avoid meeting guarantees made to workers when the company was spun off: that their terms and conditions would mirror those of Ford employees.

In the first place, the Visteon workers are fighting

for a better redundancy package than the statutory minimum they are currently being offered. But many of them also hope that a deal can be reached whereby they will be offered work in another part of Ford. At the 4 April meeting Unite London region organiser Steve Hart told the meeting that they were fighting for jobs, not just better redundancy terms.

Visteon has plants in other parts of the world. Some of the workers think that the work they have been doing will move to a large plant in Turkey.

What the Visteon workers can win depends on many factors. The most important is what support they can get from elsewhere in Ford and from their union, Unite. They are visiting Ford factories in the UK and arguing for Ford workers to boycott Visteon parts. Their union Unite should be arguing strongly for this and facilitating visits. It is not clear to what extent this is happening. So far the union has not repudiated the occupations, although they are clearly illegal; they have supported the occupations with words and financial and legal assistance, but how far they are willing to go will be tested quickly.

Clearly, the occupation cannot be sustained indefinitely. The Unite region has done a lot of work to make life liveable inside the factory, with food, bedding, etc.. But this can only go on so long: workers could become demoralised without results.

Several things need to happen:

Support from the rest of the labour movement must be overwhelming — Visteon workers are not just fighting for themselves. Many workers feel they are fighting for dignity and respect. They want to inspire emulation: they want job losses to be fought by other groups of workers.

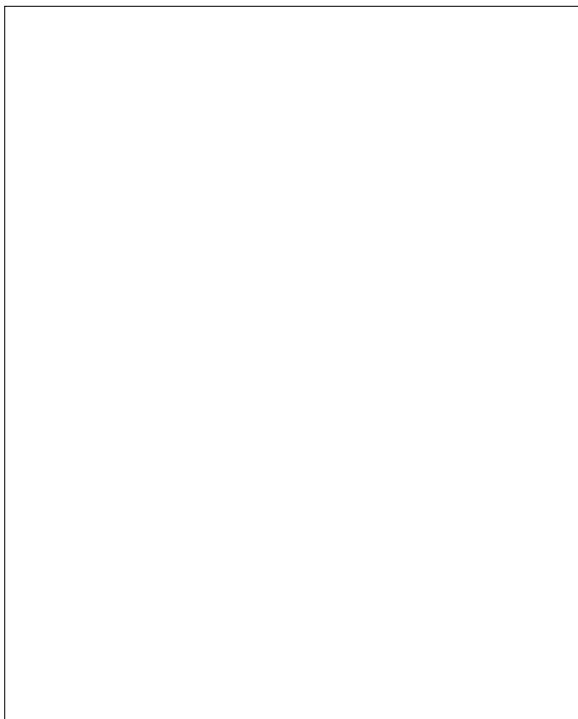
This relatively small group of workers cannot be expected to bear the whole weight of the fightback on their own shoulders.

The occupation must be publicised widely so that it becomes an inspiring example: the Visteon workers will not become isolated if other groups of workers are going into occupation. News that schools and nurseries in Glasgow threatened with closure have been occupied by parents suggests that the tactic can take off elsewhere, but people have to hear that news.

Workers in Ford, former co-workers of Visteon workers, should be lobbied and encouraged to help their fight with donations and by boycotting Visteon products.

International links should be cultivated where they can be; the workforce at Visteon Enfield is very mixed in their backgrounds (and ages and gender — there are many women among the workers, and some in the occupation). Links should be made where they can be with other workforces in the supply chain, ideally in Turkey.

A deal struck between Visteon and Unite in the High Court on Monday placed a deadline for ending the occupation on Thursday 9 April. It was the price the union agreed to pay in order to keep Nolan and Hood out of prison! It is clear that jailing would



Demonstration outside the High Court on Monday 6 April

have provoked a huge reaction from many workers — the company decided that discretion is the better part of valour. Kevin and Piers are banned from going inside the factory again; if they do, they face immediate imprisonment, but they are in touch with the occupation. The deal also includes Kevin flying to the US with other Unite representatives, including joint general secretary Derek Simpson, on Wednesday 8 April to a meeting with the Visteon corporation.

To judge by the mood of the workers attending a support meeting in Haringey on Monday night they seem satisfied with the deal struck at the High Court. But on Thursday, if they get bad news back from the US — that the Visteon corporation will not meet their demands they will have to decide whether to fight on. It is vital that this brief hiatus is used to keep building for a sustained fight, a fight that is spread to other workers.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO BUILD SUPPORT

- Publicise lessons from the occupations:
- Use the occupations to show that workers can and must resist redundancies — at the very least, workers must fight for the most favourable redundancy terms possible.
- Use the occupations to argue that factories should not simply close when companies are in financial difficulty: workers should be able to see the company accounts and make suggestions of how production can be reorganised to keep the company viable. Industries that are laying off workers should be nationalised under workers’ control. Redundancy is not the obvious solution to financial difficulty: workers need jobs, and all enterprises can be adapted to create goods that people need. At Visteon, the machinery can be used to create parts for many more uses than cars. The workers themselves know and say that.
- For Enfield, email messages of support to visteonoccupation@gmail.com. Take collections to support the occupations; send cheques payable to “HSG” c/o Haringey Support Group, PO Box 2474, London N8. Include a note saying what it is for. For Belfast, email messages to dmcmurray@unitetheunion.com.
- Visit the factories in Belfast, Enfield and Basildon at any time, but particularly when rallies are called. There are already bailiffs on the site in Enfield.

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